Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism

The political development of the industrial bourgeoisie, 1906–1934

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Introduction

Post-Risorgimento liberalism

Liberalism, in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, was essentially a preindustrial and predemocratic phenomenon, one that even in the best of cases had to adapt itself painfully to new demands engendered by the process of modernization. Only during the final quarter of the nineteenth century did even the most-advanced European nations begin to assume a distinctively urban–industrial character, as well as extend the franchise to broad strata of the previously excluded population. Industrialization and democratization progressively altered the very nature of European politics: elitist and loosely organized bourgeois parties and parliamentary factions found themselves confronted by increasingly large and bureaucratic mass parties; individual employers found themselves confronted by disciplined trade unions, more often than not affiliated with the new mass parties; the state found itself compelled to permanently intervene in previously autonomous spheres of civil society to ensure social reproduction and maintain civil order. Liberalism, in a word, had to adapt itself to a new epoch of mass politics whose characteristic elements – modern political parties, syndical associations, state intervention – were anticipated by neither classical liberal theory nor practice.

That Italian liberalism failed to adapt itself adequately can be readily seen by looking backward over the past century and a half of Italy's history. Liberalism had been the guiding force behind the Risorgimento; from unification to the rise of Fascism, liberalism had been virtually synonymous with national politics. It was the dominant ideology; it was the professed position of the entire *classe dirigente,* it was the juridical foundation of the Constitution. In post-Fascist Italy, liberalism survives as a residual, minor ideology. Liberals are but a marginal party, rarely receiving 5 percent of the vote in a political system dominated by Marxists and Catholics. These two dominant forces of post-Fascist politics, significantly enough, first emerged in pre-Fascist Italy as popular movements largely outside and against

liberalism, which excluded mass participation and then, once the larger European trend toward democratization was well under way, failed to integrate the two rapidly growing popular movements within the traditional and essentially unaltered institutional framework. Fascism, within this century-and-a-half period, marks a qualitative divide. With the rise and consolidation of Fascism, liberal dominance comes to an end, never again to reassert itself, but the two popular movements, though suppressed under Fascism, nevertheless ascend thereafter to positions of political dominance. Such a manner of posing the problem, however preliminary and schematic, allows us at least to situate Fascism, anticipating what we shall specify as the internal contradictions of Italian liberalism, as well as delimiting the terrain upon which Fascism, born of liberalism's crisis, took root and flowered.

The primary structural problem of Italian liberalism was an ever deepening contradiction between a developing society and a static institutional framework, a contradiction exacerbated both by factors specific to Italy (e.g., limited capital and natural resources, a traditional culture antagonistic or indifferent to economic development) and by those generic to most belated developers (e.g., peripheral and dependent status in prestructured international markets; little or no time lag between capital accumulation, on the one hand, and "precocious" distributive demands by organized labor, on the other; the tendency to define the domestic situation on the basis of experiences and models peculiar to "advanced" nations, whether appropriate or not). On one side of this contradiction stood a society that rather quickly and abruptly had entered the developmental process, leading to the mobilization of new as well as formerly passive strata that, together, began to advance participatory and distributive claims through the agency of organizational forms (mass parties and labor syndicates) and ideologies (Socialism and revolutionary syndicalism), copied, for the most part, from the advanced nations across the Alps. On the other side stood a nonadaptive, essentially preindustrial and predemocratic institutional framework which could neither respond to the new claims nor integrate the new organizational forms and ideologies.

This institutional framework, which had emerged from the Risorgimento and was linked to a rather unique and transitional social order,

was postfeudal yet preindustrial. It had been constituted to mediate among the narrow spectrum of interests specific to the enfranchised 2 percent of the population, mostly large landowners and professionals. Due to the limited degree of political participation and the narrow range of politically articulated interests, this institutional framework was characterized by informal representation, aprincipled trade-offs, and the co-optation of potential opposition through patronage and corruption. This was the social basis of *trasformismo,* the Italian alternative to party and interest-group formation experienced in northern Europe and Great Britain.

The politically enfranchised class, for the most part, subscribed to the cautious, empirical liberalism associated with Cavour. There was little significant opposition from the extreme Right, as few aristocrats entertained a reactionary alternative, a return to the pre-1789 social order; generally speaking, they were already engaged in capitalistic market relations. Similarly, there was little significant opposition from the extreme Left. The peasants were mainly apolitical, though given to spontaneous violence; the bourgeoisie had nothing to gain and everything to lose from social revolution because feudalism already had been abolished; and an industrial proletariat, which might have advanced oppositional claims, had yet to be formed. The church, while dogmatically antiliberal, had ruled itself out of national politics with Pius IX's *Non Expedit.*

Yet by the turn of the century, the process of development had already begun to generate significant social differentiation and political polarization. With the rise of the "social problem" during the 1890s, the apparent adequacy of the Risorgimento institutional framework, linked as it was to a unique and transitional social order, began to show signs of increasing strain. Liberal hegemony, for the first time, was challenged from the outside as Socialism and Catholicism began to articulate the needs of hitherto excluded and passive popular classes, opening up new, oppositional public spheres. At the same time, liberalism began to erode from within. On the one hand, the bourgeois bloc became increasingly fragmented as newer elements, such as industrialists, bankers, and large-scale commercial traders (the so-called productive bourgeoisie), began to articulate and autonomously organize their own sectoral interests, no longer satisfied with their subordinate bourgeois status or confident that the

preindustrial bourgeois politicians (sometimes disparaged as the "parasitic bourgeoisie") were willing or able to further their interests or even defend them against the newly emergent mass organizations. On the other hand, liberalism was losing more and more of the younger generation to the two mass movements and to nationalism, a particular expression of bourgeois youth's disaffection from what they viewed as a petty, unadventurous, and corrupt liberal tradition.

Despite eventual democratization and the formal organization of interests, no fundamental alteration or reconstitution of the inherited liberal institutional framework occurred. The increasingly fragmented elements of the bourgeois bloc developed no vehicle to aggregate their separate interests into a common, collective class interest. Most importantly in this regard, they failed to form a national liberal party to compete with the emergent Socialist and Catholic Parties. And when this step was finally taken, twenty days before Mussolini's March on Rome, it was too little, too late. Liberal politicians like Giolitti believed that the new mass movements could be co-opted within the framework of traditional *trasformismo* politics, mistakenly confident that this form of mediation, which had been developed earlier to accommodate the limited upper-class spectrum of interests interior to the agricultural–professional bloc, would prove sufficiently elastic now to embrace the full class spectrum and increasingly organized interests. Liberals found it ever more difficult to bridge the gap between themselves and the newly activated masses, and to do so in such a way that the latter might be preemptively inserted into the traditional institutional framework.

Here Barrington Moore's famous observations regarding the absence of a thoroughgoing bourgeois revolution are highly suggestive. The absence of such a revolution in Italy, and the self-conscious exclusion of the masses at the time of unification, greatly exacerbated the problems of institutional penetration, integration, and legitimacy, generic to all experiences of modernization. At the level of structure, few channels existed within the traditional institutional framework wherein mass parties and syndicates might have functioned. At the level of ideology, it became increasingly difficult for liberals to legitimate themselves, both because liberalism was theoretically bound to the principle of rule by consent and because liberalism lacked any historical linkages in Italy to the non-elites. Given the socially limited nature of the Risorgimento, the Italian bourgeoisie had little prior

experience in social mobilization, in providing the nation with an affirmative ideal, universal in scope, with which the bourgeoisie might have learned, in fact, to rule by consensus rather than by coercion. Thus, with further social differentiation, democratization, and the autonomous organization of interests, the liberal political system progressively lost its capacity to mediate, to rule, to even sustain itself. The mass movements were separately unable to impose their programs upon the nation, yet the liberals were no longer capable of ruling in their own right. Fascism, as Renzo De Felice suggests, responded to this fractured, nonhegemonic constellation of class relations as if it were a negative aggregation, imposing a new compulsive system of mediation upon the nation based practically on independent executive authority and ideologically on corporatism as the transcendence of failed liberalism.

Ideologically, liberals never developed a substantive national ideal or legitimating principle to justify their dominance. Italian liberalism, rather than a creed, from the very outset had been a modus operandi, a means by which to strike short-term compromises within a narrowly circumscribed stratum of society. Related to this limited ideological development was retarded party development, and for essentially the same reason: given the exclusive, class-specific electorate, what need was there for alternative political parties, or parties at all, to articulate so restricted a range of interests within such a narrow political arena? Differences within the politically enfranchised stratum could be mediated by personalistic and informal compromise; there was no compelling need, in the absence of organized opposition, to develop superfluous institutional forms such as parties. What would later be called *trasformismo* – or shifting, aprincipled centrist coalitions revolving about dominant personalities – had already been anticipated before unification in Cavour's 1852 *connubio* when the leader of the Center-Right struck a deal with Rattazzi, leader of the Center-Left. As one student of Italian parties comments:

> In practice, for the British two-party system an Italian "government party" system was substituted which would dominate national political life for decades to come. This expression defines a ministerial majority which could be based on two political groups but also on an indeterminate number of supporting tendencies, political currents in their complex of single deputies. The incumbent Prime Minister was the epicenter of this convergence which emerged around his person and dissolved the moment he left office,

to be reconstituted – in identical or modified form – around another Prime Minister.[1]

Trasformismo, a more corrupt and vulgar version of Cavour's *connubio,* further facilitated the osmosis between Left and Right tendencies within liberalism, inhibiting what some observers maintain might have otherwise led to separate liberal and conservative parties. *Trasformismo* would become the distinctive modality of political life – not a public competition between principled and oppositional parties, but a semipublic and rather autonomous game between *ministriali* and *antiministriali.* The prime minister, who often was also minister of the interior, would use prefects and other discretionary means to "make elections" and "manufacture majorities." Pejorative expressions like "parliamentary incest" and "parliamentary alchemism" characterized this practice, which in the popular consciousness reflected a decline in culture and led to contempt for liberal politics.[2]

The widening gap between a dynamic society and a static institutional framework was apparent in the peculiar insularity of parliamentary life, where the rise and fall of governments had less to do with crisis situations or fundamental differences over public policy than with success or failure in forming and maintaining amorphous *combinazioni* among deputies who, as an almost entirely autonomous group, had themselves elected quite independently of outside forces and interests. In this regard, Paolo Farneti's study of the social composition of Parliament from 1861 to 1914 is most revealing. During the period of the Destra Storica (1861–76), parliamentary leadership was relatively homogeneous and representative of the dominant economic stratum, landowners. According to Farneti, deputies of the Destra Storica had three attributes in common: they came from the nobility, they were landowners, and they had participated in the Risorgimento. This homogeneity of parliamentary leadership and linkage to economic interest declined significantly when the Sinistra Storica came to power. Deputies of the Sinistra Storica, being generally younger and coming from the professional strata, lacked the same shared experiences and direct linkages to the economy. This is particularly important because as Italy industrialized, the number of

[1] Francesco Leoni, *Storia dei partiti politici italiani* (Naples: Guida Editore, 1971), pp. 60–1. All translations from foreign-language sources are my own.

[2] John A. Thayer, *Italy and the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 44–54.

industrialists in Parliament did not significantly increase. The slack, so to speak, was taken up by lawyers and, to a lesser degree, by other professionals (journalists, professors, physicians). Farneti's data indicate that the Italian parliament was composed of proportionately more lawyers and fewer industrialists from 1892 to 1914 than was the case in France and Germany. Furthermore, Farneti concludes that the Italian parliament was composed more of independent political brokers than direct representatives of either industrial or agricultural interests. Because of the limited franchise (1.9 percent of the population under the Destra Storica, extended to 7 percent under the Sinistra Storica through easing property and literacy qualifications), the logic of *trasformismo,* and the capacity to "make elections," these lawyer–politicians rendered themselves far more autonomous than their parliamentary counterparts elsewhere in Europe. For example, Farneti found that the number of Italian deputies who had served in five or more legislatures was three times greater than in France. Italy had proportionally fewer new deputies whose parliamentary careers were interrupted by one or more legislatures out of office.[3] In short, Italian deputies had not only longer parliamentary careers, but longer *uninterrupted* ones. Yet the stability of parliamentary careers, in and of itself, could not ensure the long-term viability of the liberal political system; in fact, it only underscored Parliament's insularity, tending to confirm the view shared by both the extreme Left and the extreme Right that the government was dominated by self-centered "politicians" who in no significant sense represented *le pays réel.*

The contradictions between a dynamically changing society and a static institutional framework dramatically exploded during the 1890s in worker and peasant agitations, declarations of martial law, dissolutions of "subversive organizations," arbitrary arrests, banking crises, political scandals, the assertion of exceptional powers by prime ministers, the dissolution of Parliament and several municipal governments, and the assassination of the king. In 1887, the so-called parliamentary dictatorship of Agostino Depretis passed on to Francesco Crispi, another man of the Left and former lieutenant to Garibaldi during the Sicilian campaign. Crispi, an ardent admirer of Bismarck, combined a policy of domestic repression with imperialism and, in fact, would fall from power with the tragic Italian defeat at Adowa in

[3] Paolo Farneti, *Sistema politica e società civile* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1971), pp. 169–71, 194–280.

1896. His tenure in office, plus the repressive governments from 1896 to 1900, constituted a major crisis period for the liberal system that had emerged from the Risorgimento, one that almost brought constitutional rule to an end. Had it not been for Italy's defeat at Adowa, Crispi's combination of imperialism and domestic repression might well have developed into a consolidated dictatorship. His successor, the conservative and unimaginative Marquis di Rudini, initially attempted a policy of social reconciliation: Italy's African claims were scaled down to relative insignificance, an amnesty was granted to most of those condemned during the agitations of 1894, and a government commission was appointed to study the causes of social unrest in Sicily that had radicalized the peasant leagues (*fasci siciliani*).

Conciliation, however, left unaltered the underlying causes of mass unrest; no program of reform was entertained. Sidney Sonnino, a leading conservative who during the 1880s had advocated a program of Tory-like reform, now argued in his famous January 1897 essay *Torniamo allo statuto* for a return to royal prerogatives and the creation of a unified liberal party to do battle against the two new popular movements, Socialism and Catholicism, which now threatened the institutional order. Meanwhile, a bad harvest, compounded by a reduction in American grain imports, caused a precipitous rise in the price of bread and flour products. This would lead to another and far more extensive wave of social unrest in 1898, the so-called *anno terribile,* when rioting broke out in many of the major cities (Rome, Parma, Florence, Naples), as well as throughout the countryside. These agitations culminated in Milan, where in May, responding to a call for a general strike, General Bava Beccaris lost his head and used artillery against unarmed civilians. For having saved the nation from "revolution," the general was decorated by the king. With no evidence of culpability, hundreds were arrested (including Socialist, radical, and Republican deputies), and Socialist and Catholic organizations were dissolved and their journals suppressed. The universities of Rome, Naples, Padua, and Bologna were closed, and civil servants were placed on military footing so that disobedience might be punished under martial law.

Such blatantly anticonstitutional measures threatened di Rudini's ruling coalition when Giuseppe Zanardelli, leader of the Center-Left, resigned from the cabinet at the end of May. In mid-June, di Rudini

requested exceptional powers from Parliament that would have further restricted civil liberties, but this was met with opposition from the Left, as well as the Right. With his majority in Parliament now shattered, di Rudini resigned, whereupon the king appointed General Luigi Pelloux prime minister.

With Pelloux, the so-called institutional crisis of the 1890s came to a head, although like his predecessor, he too began his government in a conciliatory manner, appointing some men of the Center-Left to cabinet posts and disregarding the repressive decrees which had been issued under di Rudini. Lacking a program and political skill, Pelloux soon fell under the influence of the conservative *éminence grise* Sonnino. Instead of granting an expected amnesty for those arrested in 1898, in February 1899 Pelloux introduced legislation to control public meetings, limit the press, and send political offenders to penal colonies. When the Center-Left members of his cabinet objected, they were replaced with conservatives. And when debate began on these measures, the extreme Left, fearing that Pelloux might have a majority, resorted to obstructionist tactics. Zanardelli and Giolitti, of the Center-Left, while opposing such tactics, spoke out against the government's demands for limiting debate on so controversial a set of issues. Giolitti, in particular, laid bare the dilemma facing the government: either it could attempt to draw the masses toward the nation's established institutions or it could adopt a futile policy of repression, which would only drive the politicized popular classes to further violence and away from established institutions.

Pelloux finally forbade the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Parliament) to meet for six days and on 26 June 1899 withdrew the exceptional bills, presenting in their place a royal decree. At that point, members of the Center-Left, led by Zanardelli and Giolitti, joined the opposition. Obstructionism continued and when the president of the Chamber suddenly declared that debate was closed and the motion would be called, violence broke out: Sonnino and the Socialist Bissolati came to blows, while other Socialist deputies broke the urns in which ballots were cast. Pelloux promptly ordered their arrest and closed the Chamber for three months. Shortly thereafter, he dissolved the Socialist town council of Milan and replaced it with a nominated royal commission.

In February 1900, the Supreme Court (Corte dei Conti) ruled that the royal decree was an unwarranted act of the executive with no

more authority than any other bill before Parliament. When in March the decree was again presented to the Chamber of Deputies, obstructionism resumed. The government then attempted to amend the rules of procedure to restrict freedom of debate, whereupon the Extreme Left and the Center-Left abandoned the Chamber. This action would resemble the Aventine secession of 1924, when, in the wake of the Matteotti assassination, opponents of Fascism also left the Chamber. Unlike that instance, which Mussolini unreservedly exploited by having the remaining deputies simply pass repressive legislation, Pelloux chose to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. He failed to gain the popular mandate he had sought via the elections. Faced with a unified extreme Left and Center-Left and opposed by the prestigious *Corriere della Sera,* the government could obtain only a narrow majority, whereas the declared opposition had doubled their number. Pelloux resigned and the king appointed eighty-year-old Senator Saracco to head a transitional government. Several days later, King Umberto was assassinated, and in February 1901 his son, Vittorio Emanuelle III, appointed a new government headed by the leaders of the Center-Left, Zanardelli and Giolitti, ending the 1898–1900 crisis.

Though the liberal–democrats emerged triumphant from the travail of the 1890s, two observations must be made. First, authoritarian alternatives to the crisis-prone liberal system already had presented themselves. Second, the liberal–democratic victory was more apparent than real. It was based on a short-term, essentially defensive alliance between the extreme Left and Center-Left, destined to fall apart the moment the threat of reaction ended. This alliance was strictly a parliamentary phenomenon, having no basis outside the Chamber among the various social strata and organized groups of the population at large. In no way was the institutional framework itself altered either to integrate the masses or to prepare the liberals for competition, as a modern political party, against the "reds" and "blacks." Instead, Giolitti, who would dominate Italian politics for the next two decades until Mussolini came to power, naively presumed that extending the elastic limits of *trasformismo* from a restricted upper-class spectrum to the popular classes and instituting a limited program of co-optive reform would jointly prove adequate to the task of preserving the nineteenth-century institutional framework within a twentieth-century context of mass politics. The manifold effects of modernization, and in particular the development of mod-

ern parties and organized interest groups, were too extensive in scope and too weighty in bearing to be accommodated by any such sleight of hand, even when attempted by the greatest alchemist within the Italian political tradition.

The Giolittian system

In stark contrast with the tumultuous 1890s, the first decade of the new century has been looked back upon as a belle époque. Externally, Europe's long depression gave way to a new period of prosperity and expanded international trade. Not only did Italy passively benefit from this change in the international business cycle, but it experienced its own industrial takeoff, after rather slow and discontinuous progress the preceding decade. That material life had significantly improved for many Italians is indicated by the fact that real wages rose by 21 percent, the highest rate of increase from unification until World War I.[4] For this decade at least, Italy was spared the severe economic distress which had precipitated social unrest earlier. Yet it would be crudely economistic to presume that the coming of good times alone accounted for the relative stability of the new decade, for this would tend to overlook the enlightened political mediations of Giolitti, who had at least temporary success in changing the direction of state policy, though not the institutional framework itself.

Giovanni Giolitti began his career in 1862, working for the Ministry of Justice. The young lawyer rose quickly through the ranks of the state administration, holding important posts in the Ministry of Finance under the governments of the Right and then the Left, until he entered Parliament as a deputy in 1882. It has been said that Giolitti's somewhat atypical bureaucratic background accounted for his predilection to view politics as administration, his preoccupation with economic problems, and his unembellished, pragmatic, commonsense manner, so much at variance with the rhetorical pomposity of many Italian parliamentarians. As Mack Smith notes, "The most common accusation against Giolitti by historians has not been that he was authoritarian or corrupt, but that he was prosaic and pedestrian."[5]

[4] Salvatore Salardino, *Italy from Unification to 1919* (New York: Crowell, 1970), p. 115. For time-series data on real wages see Shepard B. Clough, *The Economic History of Modern Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 382–3.

[5] Denis Mack Smith, *Italy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 287.

He made but one attempt to quote Dante in a speech before the Chamber, and got the citation wrong. Yet if he was a cultural philistine, as maintained by the literati of the time, Giolitti nevertheless was unusually adept in parliamentary debate: witty, in full command of the relevant facts, and well prepared with sober arguments.[6] Moreover, he was certainly one of the most enlightened liberals regarding the "social question." Convinced, as he often claimed, that the forward thrust of the masses toward their share of economic and political power was inevitable in fact and fully legitimate in principle, Giolitti maintained that actions taken by the incumbent *classe dirigente* would largely determine whether this mass ascendancy would be violent and subversive of the existing structure or orderly and ultimately conservative.

As early as 1886, Giolitti argued that Italy had a choice between two routes: one imperial, the other democratic. The former would squander the nation's limited resources and necessitate domestic repression; the latter, which he advocated, would favor internal development oriented toward promoting material well-being for the masses, a precondition for their subsequent peaceful entry into national politics.[7] Instead of employing the army as a class militia, repressing every organized attempt by workers to defend their interests, Giolitti recognized both the desirability of syndicates and the right to strike, so long as these remained within the bounds of legality and did not undermine public order. Already in his first ministry (1892–3), cut short by the Banca Romana scandal, Giolitti had advocated a progressive income tax, refused to dissolve workers' syndicates, and took no repressive action against the *fasci siciliani.* When he returned to power in 1901, as minister of the interior under Zanardelli, and in 1903, as prime minister, he set in motion a broad range of reforms (social legislation, public works, lowering taxes on necessities) clearly favoring the lower classes. Responding to conservatives in Parliament, Giolitti declared:

> Sonnino is right in saying that the country is sick politically and morally, but the principal cause of its sickness is that the classes in power have been spending enormous sums on themselves and their own interests, and have obtained the money almost entirely from the poorer sections of society. . . . I

[6] Thayer, *Italy and the Great War,* p. 56.
[7] Nino Valeri, *Giolitti* (Turin: UTET, 1971), pp. 206–9.

deplore as much as anyone the struggle between classes, but at least let us be fair and ask who started it.[8]

Social peace was to be ensured by having the state, for the first time, actually promote the welfare of the lower classes and also play an active role in helping institutionalize and regulate class conflict. While prefects continued their traditional political function of "making elections," their social function changed significantly under Giolitti. According to one study of Italian prefects:

> They were no longer to side automatically with the industrialists and landowners in conflicts with labor and to bombard the government with requests for troops, but to mediate such conflicts from a neutral standpoint. Moreover, they were to seek and to remove the causes of social distress and conflict by promoting improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the working classes.[9]

Prefects not only were to help mediate labor conflicts in their municipalities but were to "preoccupy themselves with economic questions, and to interest themselves in salary levels, workers' complaints, and other situations that might lead to industrial strife and peasant disturbances."[10] In this vein, Giolitti established a Labor Office in the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce, charged with the task of collecting and publishing information on labor conditions. He also created an Advisory Council on Labor (Consiglio Superiore del Lavoro) – composed of deputies, functionaries, and representatives of capital and labor – which drafted and presented social legislation to Parliament.

In addition and related to the upturn in the business cycle, the success of Giolitti's program during the first decade of the new century was based on two sets of mediations: (1) Giolitti's sponsorship of a tacit alliance between the new trade-union movement, dominated by reform Socialists, and the new industrial associations (both groups, despite obvious class differences, were jointly committed to further industrialization and developing an institutionalized modus vivendi, based on syndical interaction, to resolve labor conflict without sporadic and violent disruptions to production); and (2) Giolitti's ability

[8] Mack Smith, *Italy*, pp. 214–15.
[9] Robert Fried, *The Italian Prefects* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 148.
[10] Frank Coppa, "Economic and Ethical Liberalism in Conflict: The Extraordinary Liberalism of Giovanni Giolitti," *Journal of Modern History* 42 (June 1970): 200.

to gain the support of Socialists and Catholics, exploiting antagonisms between the two mass movements while seeking, at the same time, to insert each separately within the ongoing game of *trasformismo*.

The first set of mediations, regarding trade unions and industrial associations, will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 1. Here we will only note that this alliance began to break down after 1910, when economic conditions worsened, closing the margin that had previously allowed for mutually beneficial trade-offs, and when the reformist trade unions proved less able to maintain internal discipline over their rank and file than was the case with their industrialist counterparts.

We come then to the second set of mediations, regarding Socialists and Catholics. Until 1912, though with some brief interruptions, reformists dominated the Socialist Party, as well as the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (CGL). Because of the progressive role he had played during the 1898–1900 crisis, Giolitti had gained their respect. Writing in *Critica Sociale,* Claudio Treves proclaimed: "There is on the other side a man who has understood us." In contrast with reactionary bourgeois leaders, he argued, Giolitti would promote economic development and political liberty, requisite conditions for the further development of the Socialist movement.[11] Seeing that in France the reformist Alexandre Millerand had entered the cabinet of Waldeck-Rousseau, and hoping to have the Socialists tied to his government with a similar assumption of ministerial responsibility, Giolitti offered a cabinet post to Turati in 1903 and to Bissolati in 1911. Despite their own personal inclinations, both Socialist leaders rejected the offer, fearing acceptance might further split an already divisive movement. Yet the Socialist Party, in the main, and Socialist deputies in particular, consistently supported Giolitti until 1912. Giolitti not only expected such support but "punished" reformists when they let revolutionaries get out of hand. When, for example, revolutionary syndicalists, who tried to take over the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) in 1904, called for Italy's first general strike, Giolitti refrained from taking any repressive action but instead dissolved Parliament and called for national elections. Given the fear engen-

[11] *Critica Sociale* 8 (1898–9): 182–4, reprinted in Gastone Manacorda, ed., *Il socialismo nella storia d'Italia,* 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1972), 1:275–83.